

THE MULE IS DEAD; LONG LIVE THE AUTO TRUCK!

Gasolene Spells Extinction Not Only for the Army Mule but, Perhaps, for the Cavalry Branch of the Service—Mexican Desert or Mountain Pass, the Auto Truck Goes Anywhere a Mule or a Horse Can Go, and Gets There in Half the Time

By W. O. M'GEEHAN



where in the War Department's records. Consequently, they are working out the auto truck problems in the field.

But the auto trucks are standing up wonderfully well. They plough through the alkali dust up to the hubs, they jolt over the rocky places, they flounder through the sandy wastes that grind the bearings, and they puff through the mountain passes. They go anywhere the mule will go, and they get there in better time.

While the long train from Columbus to Namiqipa is lined with the carcasses of mules and horses, the auto trucks go rumbling on in their work of keeping the field army supplied with food and ammunition. They perform new miracles upon every new emergency.

company of infantry twice as far on a forced march as the best mounted troop of cavalry could travel.

Cavalry charges are rare in these days of rapid-fire rifles and machine guns. The horses are used only to get the men to the front, where they operate as infantry. When the gasolene-fed mounts can get them there so much faster than the horses, it begins to look bad for the cavalry horse.

The United States army of the near future will travel extensively on gasolene. There will be few more heart-breaking infantry hikes, and there will be few more wild cavalry rides, leaving in their wake dead and dying horses. Even field artillery can be carried by the auto trucks.

All of this should have been realized before.

colored sergeant of the 9th Cavalry who had been detailed to drive a five-ton truck. He was addressing his vehicle.

"Yes, Betsy, old girl," he was saying, "Ah knows that this here cheap government gasolene ain't the proper nourishment for a high-toned lady truck like you. But we got to make this hill, Betsy, old girl. And when we gets to Corallitas Ah'm going to put some of that nice cool spring water in your radiator. That'll freshen you up a whole lot, Betsy."

"Does you all want a little more oil in your bearings, Betsy? If you does, jes' say so. 'Tain't no trouble at all for me. Ah jes' thought you might, because your pretty engine was breathing a little hard on that last hill. Ah don't want any of them fresh New York chauffeurs to think you was complaining, Betsy, because me and you knows that you don't complain."

new truck slowed down and began to pick the going.

The captain shot 'cross-country from the rear in his standard runabout to see what was cutting his train in two.

"What's the trouble?" he demanded of the civilian driver.

"No trouble at all," replied the driver. "But eight miles is all that I am going to do with this load and over this sort of road. You can go ahead with those Barney Oldfields if you want to. I'll catch up with you after half of those trains are wrecked."

The captain was a trifle angry. He reminded the driver that all trains were ordered kept intact. It was no 'cross-country race. It was a military truck train. The driver was obdurate, and the train had to slow down to a reasonable pace. The driver was right, though very unmilitary. The loads which the trucks

saken place. Whereupon the captain gave orders to the sergeant of his guard. The non-commissioned officer informed the drivers that the first of them who turned back to Columbus would be systematically shot up.

The drivers protested that they were American citizens and wanted their rights. The sergeant listened unmoved as he drew up his squad into a convenient place for the shooting. The drivers finally concluded that they were too far away to consult their attorneys, and the train proceeded to Namiqipa.

Civilian drivers hate the sound of the truck driver's whistle. They scoff at the military alignment, and they do not see why it should be necessary for the trucks to draw up military fashion when they arrive at the different towns en route.

Camping out away from a garrisoned town, the truck trains take the same formation that was used by the emigrant trains when they were forced to guard against Indian attacks at night. The trucks are distributed in a circle, with the captain's runabout, the cook truck and the ammunition truck in the center. Placed in this formation, the truck train is a difficult proposition for a bandit band to rush.

No doubt, many a band has been watching those valuable trains of food and ammunition, longing to pounce upon them, but they refrained. A well ordered truck train could get into battle formation in a few minutes, and the Springfield rifles would be covering every point of attack very effectively.

A quarter of a million dollars in gold was shipped in with one train, guarded by fifty picked marksmen. Bandit bands, knowing of this, probably longed to rush it, but they did not make the attempt. At night, in its proper formation, with its outposts alert, the well-conducted train should be impossible to surprise. But civilian drivers are hard to convince of the necessity for remaining alert. They will lock their ammunition in the tool boxes; and, while they are painfully solicitous of the mechanism of their trucks, they have no regard for the mechanism of the Springfield rifles which are issued to them.

They have no respect for shoulder straps. A typical incident was one near Espia. The truck train drew into the place hot and dusty. The news was spread that there was a real swimming hole twenty feet deep in the place.

Soldier guards and civilian drivers made a dash for it. As they neared it they heard a delicious splashing, but a sentry halted them. "Sorry, boys," he said, "but there's an officer bathing there now, and the orders are that nobody is allowed in till he gets through."

A big ex-taxicab driver from New York proceeded to peel off his army uniform. In another minute he dove into the pool with a mighty splash. He came to the surface and grinned cheerfully at the indignant expression of the second lieutenant, outraged at the fact that his privacy had been disturbed, apparently by an enlisted man.

"Oh, that's all right!" shouted the auto driver. "I don't mind if you are a little bit dirty. Come on in. The water is fine."

The lieutenant realized that the intruder was one of those irresponsible, irreverent civilian truckmen. There was nothing to do but to withdraw with as much dignity as could be preserved under the circumstances.

But one of these days the truck train will be systematized. The drivers will all be enlisted men. There will be a fixed rate of speed, and the trucks will all be up to determined specifications. All of this should have been accomplished by this time, but the War Department is consistently tardy.

When the truck train is perfected, the mule train will go. Also, the pride of the cavalry will be trailed in the gasolene-scented dust of the auto truck train. They will amend the epigram of the general who said "An army travels on its belly" to "An army travels on its gasolene."



TRUCK TRAIN DRAWN UP FOR DEFENCE IN THE SAME FORMATION USED BY THE PRAIRIE SCHOONERS AGAINST INDIAN ATTACKS.

There are now three hundred auto trucks at the army base at Columbus. On a pinch those three hundred trucks could move an entire brigade in one day twice as far as all the horses and mules in the world could move it. This is true, despite the fact that many of the trucks are badly racked because of bad driving, due to the failure of the War Department to foresee the transportation problem in Mexico and to provide for efficient drivers.

Not only does the successful test of the auto truck spell the passing of the mule train. It also means the passing of the cavalry, the most picturesque branch of the service. Even cavalry officers in the punitive expedition will admit that three or four auto trucks will get a

But the transportation branch of the American service has been notoriously slow and inefficient from the beginning. One of the lasting benefits of the punitive expedition will be the modernizing of this branch. The auto truck has passed the stern test, even to the satisfaction of the skeptical War Department. This bureau is beginning to realize with a childlike wonder what was thoroughly demonstrated by the armies of Europe.

For the present the auto truck trains with the army in Mexico are not working under any definite system. The organization of the truck train of the United States army has not been decided upon. Neither has the type of truck to be used in the organization been decided upon. Captains and lieutenants are busy taking notes as to net mileage and gasolene requirements; also, as to stability and reliability of the different makes of trucks in the service. The drivers are a mixed lot. Some are regular army enlisted men, detailed to drive the type of truck tentatively adopted. The others are chauffeurs of all sorts, adventurers from all over the country, college men in search of experience, and even ex-taxicab drivers from New York City. With some of the trucks under probation are men from the factories.

It is a more picturesque body than any assemblage of mule skinner. The types are more varied and the views upon things in general are more interesting. Moreover, the army chauffeur in the aggregate is naturally more intelligent than the mule skinner, whose close association with the mule has given him some of the traits of that noble animal.

To the average army chauffeur the stolid-looking, lumbering auto truck is a beautiful and a living thing.

On the road to Namiqipa I listened to a

The colored trooper adjusted some pink and green ribbon which was tied to the truck radiator. The whistle of the truck master blew. The sergeant whirled the crank, listened solicitously for an instant to his motor, and swung Betsy into line with her mates.

In contrast to this driver there is the egotistical chauffeur who considers the motor part of himself.

"I had a tough time on that last grade," he says. "My old engine was grunting all the way, and I had to keep giving myself the gas. How does the government expect a fellow like me to travel on that sort of gas? It practically cripples me from the start."

"I wasn't built to take five tons over a road like this. It's breaking my back and ruining my springs. And this blanked dashed dust is choking me to death. I looked into my carburetor and I found a whole cupful of dust. No wonder my mixture was so rotten. Then I had a lot of magnet trouble on top of that. My firm ought to build me different if it wants me to travel through this blanked dashed country."

One of the difficulties which the captain of an auto truck encounters is in maintaining discipline with a mixed company of civilians and soldiers. Civilian drivers have their own notions as to how auto trucks should be driven. It is the theory of the captain that the auto train should have a perfect alignment, with the trucks a hundred yards apart.

The civilian drivers cannot see the necessity for this. Some of them want to show that their trucks can travel the fastest. Others insist that their trucks be carefully handled. The result is that the captain, fuming inwardly, has to be a diplomat when he is in command of a mixed train of trucks.

One of these trains started out at the rate of twelve miles an hour. A short distance out of Columbus it encountered the bad roads. A

were carrying were not needed in a hurry. But if he had happened to be an army driver he would be in the guardhouse for a considerable period for insubordination.

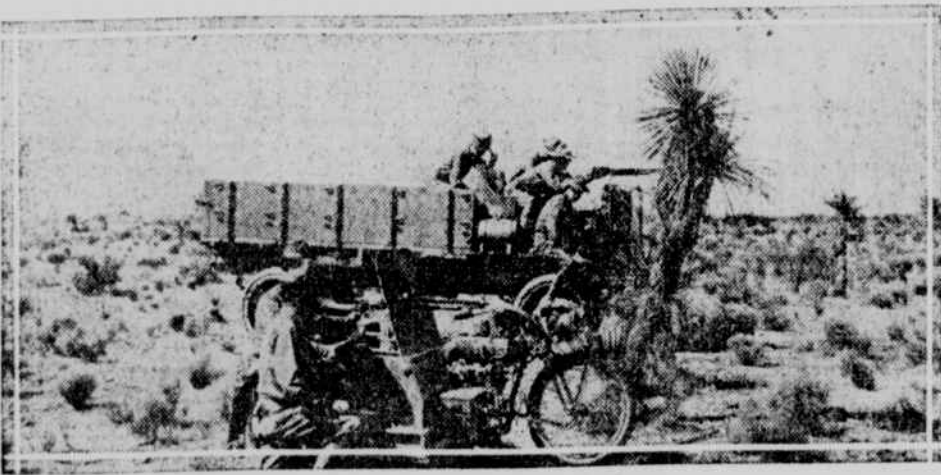
More than once the army in Mexico has been forced illegally but practically to discipline some of the civilian drivers. The most startling incident of this sort happened to a bunch of New York taxicab drivers who were shipped out to handle a train made up of a certain uniform make of trucks.

They got fifty miles into Mexico, and then decided that they did not like the country at all. They agreed that the United States government was foolish to go in at all.

Their spokesman went to the captain and informed him that they had decided to go back. They did not like the food, the water was not iced, and there was no beer in the god-for-



A COMPARATIVELY EASY STRETCH OF THE TRAVEL FROM COLUMBUS TO NAMIQUIPA.



UTO TRUCK AND MOTORCYCLE SCOUTS ARMED WITH MACHINE GUNS IN MEXICO.